

NEW

**From 3 blocks to 5 miles
in less than a year....**

Almost My Second Anniversary!

In December 2006, I found myself having trouble walking three blocks to catch the bus after work. I wasn't happy with the way I felt or with the way I looked. I had been heavy most of my life, but felt then that I was completely out of control. I had considered surgery to lose the weight, but my doctor didn't think that was a good idea. She recommended a program called 'New Direction'. It is a very low calorie diet that is medically monitored. The program offers three shakes and one breakfast bar each day. I was on the shakes for seven months and continued losing weight after going back to regular food. Along with the diet, there was a nutritionist, an exercise physiologist, and a psychologist alternating at weekly meetings.

At the start, I was told to start walking 15 minutes each day. I looked at the skinny exercise expert and thought - like that is going to happen, "I can't walk three blocks." I did try and since I was losing weight quickly it became easier. **By early spring I was able to walk a mile and by the fall of 2007 I could walk five miles. Walking became fun!!**

I lost 100 pounds and cannot explain how good it feels! If I could give someone just one day with the way I feel, it would inspire them to lose the weight. I feel the best I have during my entire adult life. I find it so much easier to live. Doing simple things like looking under my desk or bending over to pick something up is so much easier. I don't mind housecleaning or carrying groceries in. To this day, I am still finding things I can do easier with the weight off. I like the way I look. I am off blood pressure medication. I was two points from diabetes, but now my blood sugar is perfect. My self-esteem has improved. I could go on and on.

I eat entirely different. No chips, crackers, cake, pie, etc. Lots of salads, vegetables, fruit, sugar-free jello and whole grain breads. I eat one fish meal each week and lean meat or chicken the other days. Some days are meatless. I am very conscious of what I am eating. I keep a food diary each day. This helps me stay on track!

I've had the weight off one year and was able to keep it off this summer after about with bursitis and then foot surgery that kept me from walking. I learned I am able to adjust what I eat and even without the walking over the summer, I've maintained the weight. I was worried I would get out of the habit of walking, but now that I can again, it feels great. Never thought I'd say that! Besides walking, I also do strength training with bands and stretching five times a week.

My co-workers supported my weight loss effort along the way and still help me stay focused. They were a very big part of my successful mission, and I appreciate all the help they gave me.

And for those of you think you are too old to get fit and healthy, this is one 61 year-old who knows it can be done no matter what your age! Find a way that works for you and lose the weight. Become physically active! You'll feel great! I absolutely guarantee it. You won't believe how great you feel! Honest!

**Absolutely
AMAZING!**

*Karen Swiatkowski
Department of
Community Health*